

# Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ December 2016

## ★ From the Director



During the Holiday Season, as we think of all of the blessings we have in our lives, we are reminded that it is because of our Veteran heroes that we have the freedom to celebrate this time with family and friends.

I remember serving my great country during the Christmas 2003 holiday in Baghdad, Iraq. Being away from family during the holidays is difficult, but the spirit of the season was with me and everyone serving with me. I think of those days and those fine soldiers every Christmas season.

I would like to share my sincere thanks and appreciation to all who assisted with the Serving Those Who Served Program this year. This was the first year for this program and it is planned to become an annual event. IDVA estimated having 570 volunteers working in November which equaled about 2,280 hours of much needed and welcomed community service for our Illinois Heroes. According to the Points of Light, the total number of volunteer hours has an economic impact of \$53,716.80!

We also were honored to host a Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony at the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Hall—Chapter #15, in Springfield. The ceremony honored all Pearl Harbor survivors and paid tribute to the more than 2,400 Americans who lost their lives. We honored the brave men and women who gave their all during the attack in Pearl Harbor. The service members who fought relentlessly on December 7, 1941 are true heroes.

Every day, it is our honor to care for over 900 Veterans within the great state of Illinois and I'm proud of the fact that more and more Veterans make us their provider of choice every year. In the New Year, we look forward to caring for the men and women who've served our country and continuing to provide our Illinois heroes with the highest quality long term care.

As we celebrate the holiday season and enjoy spending time with our families, let us remember to cherish everything that we have. Peace, security, and the ability to gather with our friends and family members should always remind us of our veterans who donned the uniform in order to give us these crucial everyday comforts. I offer my holiday thanks and New Year wishes for veterans all around the world for ensuring our freedom to enjoy a peaceful and joy-filled holiday!

**May God Bless you and your family!**

**Erica Jeffries**, *Director, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs*

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to “Stand Up and Be Counted!” by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you're helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

**We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.**

## ★ Serving Those Who Served



Thank you to all who participated in our inaugural program – Serving Those Who Served! The STWS program brought in seven other partners to increase the success of the program. Serve Illinois, Chicago Cares, Boeing, Corporation for National & Community Service, Illinois Joining Forces, Student Veterans of America and Campus Compact. Each of these partners assisted the program with either volunteers, funding or community service projects. The program allowed organizations to register a project for volunteers to assist with during the month of November. The website created through Serve Illinois allowed Illinoisans to look for a project in their area and

sign up to volunteer for that project. At the end of the month, there were 41 projects drawing in 570 volunteers. Collectively, the projects provided service, support, and assistance to over 3,730 Illinois Veterans. Including projects like Western Elementary School, who collected 150 lbs. of candy in support of Operation Treats for Troops.

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## ★ Need a Gift Idea?



It's not too late to grab some great quick holiday gifts or stocking stuffers - **\$3 Veteran Cash Lottery tickets** - available state-wide at retailers. The newest Veterans Cash Lottery ticket is a great way to support our Illinois Veterans, with 100 percent of proceeds going to benefit Illinois veterans' organizations across the state through the Veterans' Cash Grant Fund.

The Veterans' Cash Grant Fund has allowed for more than \$13 million in grants to 300-plus veterans' organizations statewide since its launch in 2006, and it is also available to receive direct donations online - a great end-of-year donation to help other veterans.

## ★ Trees for Tomorrow

Our Veteran Home in Quincy has received a wonderful gift that will be enjoyed now and for generations to come. 50 Trees of different species were replanted throughout our property thanks to Trees for Tomorrow. Trees for Tomorrow is a local organization founded by Anne St. John and Mr. Tom Bergman of Bergman Nurseries. It was formed over ten years ago to address the deterioration of the trees along Quincy's Maine Street and for reforestation of local areas damaged by storms. In July of 2015, the town of Quincy experienced some incredible straight line winds that devastated many areas in town including the Illinois Veteran Home campus. They have replaced trees in areas recently destroyed by storm or pests and also used old historic photos to restore the tree lines of decades ago.





## ★ IDVA Calendar

**Dec 25 & 26 Christmas** – *State Offices Closed*

**Dec 26 Kwanzaa Begins**

**Jan 2 New Year's Day 2017** – *State Offices Closed*

**Jan 6 Scott Air Force Base Centennial Celebration**

**Jan 16 Martin Luther King Day** – *State Offices Closed*

## ★ Gold Star Family Christmas Tree

Governor Bruce Rauner and the IDVA staff rang in the holiday season in Chicago earlier this month with the lighting of the Christmas tree at the Thompson Center. While doing so, we honored Gold Star Families in Illinois and across the country. Each Gold Star family were able to hang an ornament on the tree remembering their loved one. The vibrant event honored, celebrated and remembered those who offered their all for our great country. The tree that sits in the Thompson Center is the official Christmas tree of the state of Illinois.



## ★ Did You Know?



Construction has re-started on our new Veterans Home in Chicago, Illinois. Precast wall panels and roof planks were placed on the East end of the building right after Thanksgiving. Each day brings us closer to assisting more of our Illinois heroes!

### IDVA employment

There are immediate-fill positions at our Veterans Homes in Manteno, LaSalle, Quincy and Anna for nurses and nurses' assistants. [Visit to learn more and apply.](#)

## ★ 75th Anniversary Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony



The IDVA hosted a Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony at the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Hall—Chapter #15) in Springfield. The ceremony honored all Pearl Harbor survivors and paid tribute to the more than 2,400 Americans who lost their lives. Rear Admiral (Retired) Nathan E. Jones offered special remarks at the solemn ceremony. The ceremony concluded with a wreath laying in Lake Springfield with a 21 gun salute, playing of Taps and a bagpipe playing Amazing Grace.

*(L-R) IDVA Veteran Homes Coordinator Gwen Diehl reading the Governor's Proclamation along with IDVA Chief of Staff Renysa Brown and Rear Admiral (Retired) Nathan Jones*



State of Illinois  
Department of Veterans' Affairs



Illinois Department of  
Veterans' Affairs